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Title: Introduction

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Introduction

From bilingualism to intercultural education. From multilingualism to multicultural education

For the last few decades Europe has become more multilingual. According to Extra and Yagmur (2008), large European cities and their metropolitan areas are nowadays centres for development of multilingualism. People with different religions and cultures, speakers of several languages are more widely met within European countries than they were 30–40 years ago. However, very few speakers become equally fluent in all languages they may know and use. Children learn languages spoken around them from different people, in different conditions and for a range of differing purposes. They do not use the language input from various languages to the same degree and have different pace of language development. Their languages and proficiency develop on different levels, but mainly in the linguistic categories of vocabulary, morphology, semantics, pragmatics and meta-linguistics (Wei, 1998).

In some giant cities, the Centre for Multicultural Education has been established (by the University of London) with the goal of studying the community languages and the bilingualism/multilingualism among their speakers. The Centre in London aims to provide teachers of community languages with training and help (Dalphinis, 1993) and to spur research on bilingual children, speakers of a particular language (Orzechowska, 1984). In some cases, the bilingual/multilingual speakers belong to national minorities or they come from a migrant or refugee family background.

In the case of national minorities, the Council of Europe has developed a Framework Convention for the protection of the rights of national minorities. It states that the *right to education* and *the right in education* for minorities (including literacy in their home language) is guaranteed by several international instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the

European Convention on Human Rights, etc. A Commentary on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities states: "[it] ensures rights to persons 'belonging to national minorities'. It is clear that these 'persons' can be men or women, children or adults. Indeed, the provisions of the Convention do not refer to formal school activities, but refer to education and education systems in broader terms" (Advisory Committee, 2006, p. 7).

The largest European (trans)national and ethnic minority are the Roma. In different countries they face differing realities of social and cultural status. In some countries they are recognised as a national minority, and they have a higher status in the society (e.g. Germany). In other countries, such as Bulgaria and Slovakia, they struggle with high and often worsening levels of discrimination. Even in Bulgaria, although the international instruments have been duly signed by the government in Sofia, the Roma do not have the right to study their mother tongue formally. It is prohibited by the government (Kyuchukov, 2020). Roma education remains an attractive topic in the public sphere, often generating rhetoric albeit little hands-on action, and unfortunately, it often becomes a ready focus for obtaining financial support and/or attracting attention to oneself within an NGO or as an academic. Yet, not all that is published or aired in the media is of high quality. Sometimes the publications on Roma are replete with stereotypical descriptions and may offer explanations as to why Roma children "do not like" to study (Kurek et al., 2012). Some articles may describe a problem without more thorough, in-depth analysis, presenting a 'solution' superficially (Matras, Legio, and Steed, 2015). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) sees the problem of Roma children differently. In her opinion, "many present education models for Roma children can be characterized as segregation, either by direct education or as a result of demographic and economic circumstances" (p. 7). The author suggests that all children must study both L1 and L2 as a compulsory subject through grades 1–12. Skutnabb-Kangas thinks it is wrong to force the minority children to study a majority language, their L2, as if it were their L1. She also suggests that all subjects should be taught through the medium of mother tongue during the first 2 years of schooling and the second language should then become a medium of education already in grade 3.

For the successful education of minority children, teachers should have certain specific skills and knowledge. In the view of Mercado and Sapiens (1992), this should include skills and knowledge that aid them in understanding:

- how the classroom settings can be arranged to support a variety of instructional strategies;
- the main principles of second language acquisition and how these can be incorporated into learning activities;
- how the children use their existing knowledge to make sense of what is going on in their classroom.

Bush (1985) draws on "critical education theory", speaking about the "pedagogy of the oppressed". In his view, contemporary schools are places where the minority/migrant/refugee children are openly discriminated and humiliated by their classmates, the schools as institutions are ignoring their existence, institutionalised racism has become an accepted tacit "normality". Only very rarely are the schools interested in perceiving "school life" from the point of view of minority/migrant/refugee children: how they feel in the classroom, what they learn there. Is this a place where they feel happy or rather oppressed and unhappy? Is the school also a school for them, where they can "see" their own culture and voice represented and study their own mother tongue?

The content of this issue of *Edukacja Międzykulturowa* is divided into four sections: articles on multicultural education, the situation of the Roma minority, research reports, and the concluding forum on aspects of intercultural education. There is also a section with book reviews and a chronicle.

In the first part of the journal, the article by Tadeusz Lewowicki explores the history of multicultural education in the Polish society. The paper addresses the situation in Poland after 1918, after 1945 and after 1989. A second article by Nettie Boivin deals with those newly arrived in Poland (refugees, migrants, transmigrants, immigrants), as well as children and intergenerational storytelling.

The second section comprises articles on Roma education by well-known scholars who explore Roma issues and Roma children's education, such as Ian Hancock, Hristo Kyuchukov, Emine Dingeç, William B. New, Łukasz Kwadrans, and Diyana Dimitrova.

The third section of the journal presents research reports by Anna Szafrańska on mixed marriages, by Anna Odrowąż-Coates and Anna Perkowska-Klejman on the English language as a component of the intercultural Erasmus exchange to and from Poland, by Joanna Sachrczuk on communicative competence of Polish and Israeli secondary school students, and by Jakub Kościółek on joint activities with migrant children.

The last section of the journal contains articles brought together in a forum of intercultural educators. Arleta Suwalska discusses the educational changes in Finland and England in the 20th century. Urszula Markowska-Manista discusses a research project on the diverse cultural backgrounds of Polish children. Urszula Namiotko focuses on the theater as an instrument for strengthening intercultural identity, and an article by Krzysztof Łukaszczek and Chen Chen addresses the role of social media in fulfilling the identity needs of citizens in the People's Republic of China.

In sum, the present issue of the journal presents new information and knowledge in the field of interculturalism and intercultural education and illuminates new emergent trends in the field of European multiculturalism and multicultural education.

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